
NEWS From:

Reps. Honda, Lofgren, and Eshoo



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Federal Legislation Would Curb Toxic Perchlorate Contamination

Chemical Found in Gilroy, Morgan Hill

WASHINGTON, May 15, 2003 — Today, **Reps. Lois Capps** (D-Santa Barbara), **Mike Honda** (D-San Jose), **Zoe Lofgren** (D-San Jose), **Anna Eshoo** (D-Atherton), and 17 others introduced legislation to protect Americans from perchlorate, a chemical contaminant found in rocket fuel that has seeped into underground water supplies and has recently been detected in Gilroy and Morgan Hill Calif. The Preventing Perchlorate Pollution Act would require the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to set Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) drinking water standard for perchlorate by July 1, 2004, and require the enhanced access to community “right to know” information about perchlorate contamination.

“Perchlorate has infiltrated wells in my district, and I am as deeply concerned as many of my constituents are,” said **Rep. Honda**. “The EPA and the Bush Administration need to step up efforts on the federal front, so that we can find out just how dangerous this toxin is, where this toxin has infiltrated, and establish policy to streamline clean-ups.”

“The people of Santa Clara County need to know whether or not their water is safe. I believe the time for federal leadership on this important health and ecological issue is now not years from now,” said **Rep. Lofgren**. “We need to know now how sensitive populations, like pregnant women, children and people who have health problems or compromised thyroid conditions, are being affected by exposure to perchlorate. When my constituents ask me what is being done on this issue, I don't want to have to say

check back with me in a couple of years. I call on the Republican leaders in Congress to help us quickly pass this bill so the EPA can begin this important study.”

“We have rocket fuel in our water. While we're trying to alert the public and clean it up, the Bush Administration has slapped a gag on the EPA and is busy trying to exempt the Defense Department from major environmental laws,” said **Rep. Eshoo**. “It's astonishing, but for this Administration which fought against standards to reduce the levels of arsenic in our drinking water, it's not surprising.”

In Santa Clara County, a plume of perchlorate has spread more than seven miles southeast through the underground aquifer, over the years contaminating hundreds of private wells that provide drinking water to nearly 2,000 people. In January, levels of perchlorate above the currently acceptable limit of four parts per billion were found in private wells in Morgan Hill.

In February 2003, the Santa Clara Valley Water District announced that two public wells in Morgan Hill and one in Gilroy had also tested above the “action level”. The presence of perchlorate in public wells in Morgan Hill is could expand the impact to 34,000 people in a city with no other source for drinking water.

The chemical is believed to have leached into the underground aquifer from a site at Tennant and Railroad Avenues where Olin Corporation manufactured highway safety flares between 1955 and 1996. Wells have only recently been tested for the chemical, which has been suspected of causing thyroid problems including, in some cases, tumors.

On April 29 2003, the Santa Clara Valley Water District announced plans to purchase a portable water treatment plant to help remove perchlorate from drinking water supplies in south Santa Clara County's groundwater basin. Within the next three months, the district expects to install a treatment system that filters well water by an ion exchange process to remove the perchlorate.